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WRESTLING WITH ANGELS

by

Robert Cooper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

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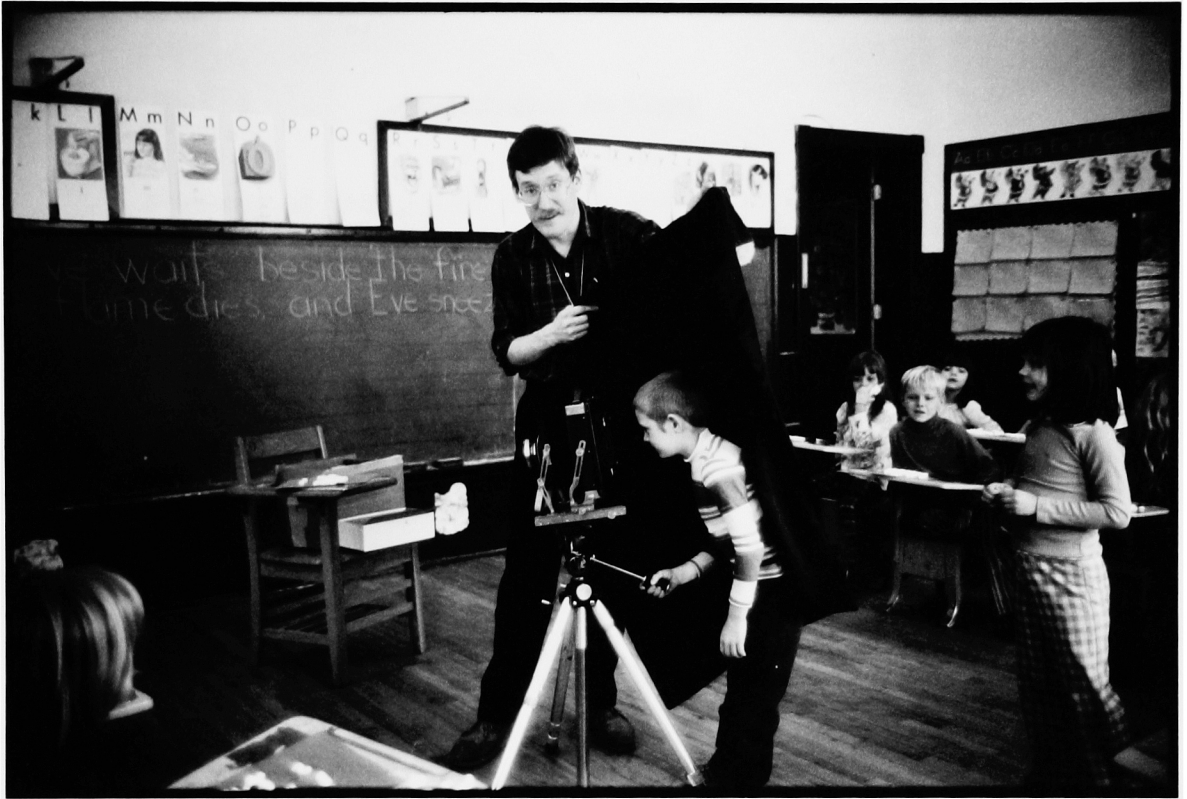
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". . . Visual perception involves all the senses and, also, the memory."

Richard Zakia, Perception and Photography,
(Rochester, New York: Light Impression
Corporation, 1979), p. 13.

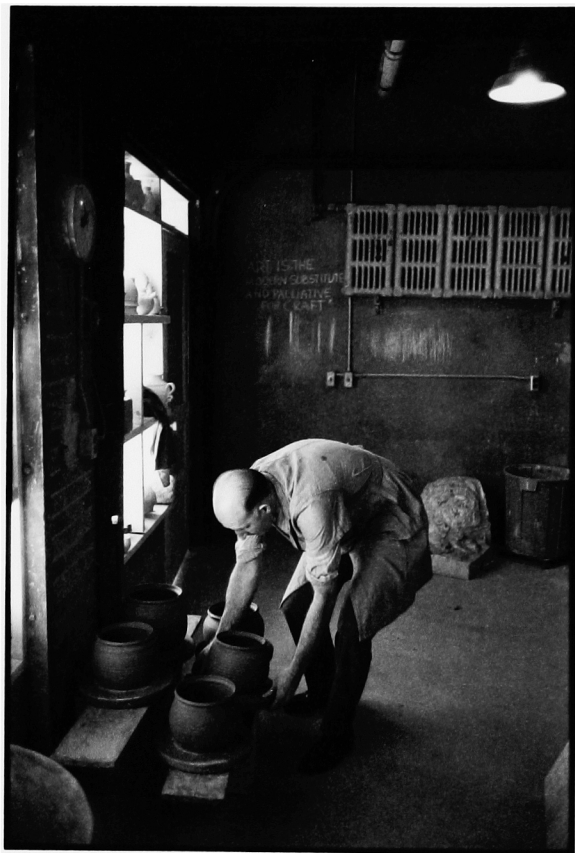
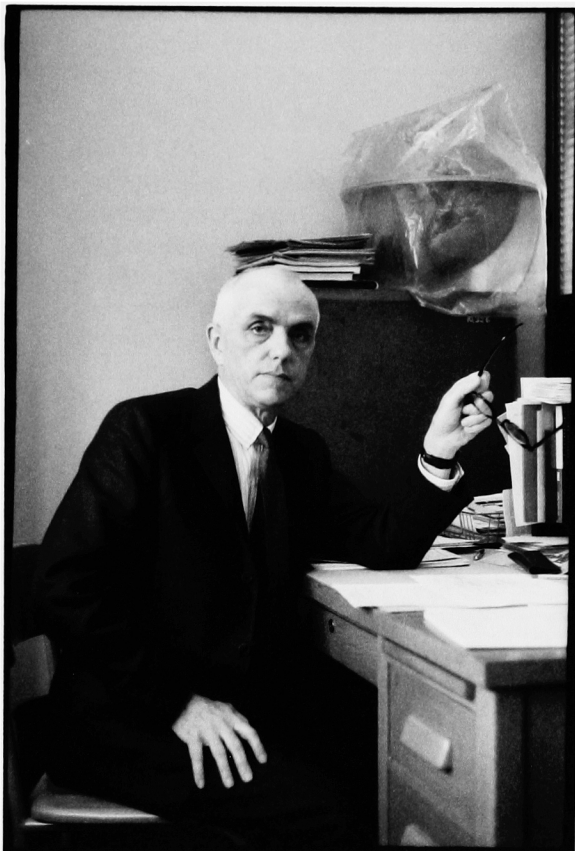


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This thesis is dedicated to

Charles C. Scott and Nelson Wells who, when I began making photographs at age 19, were the first to provide unqualified encouragement for what I was doing;



and to James Beane, Billy Beagle and Tommy Snyder.

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Frontispiece: Robert Cooper photographing at Davis Grade School, 1978.

Dedication: Nelson Wells, 1968; Charles C. Scott, 1979.

Installation Photographs

Miscellaneous Photographs

INTRODUCTION

What fascinates me most about an artist's work is his reason for working. Over the years since 1839 we have heard a lot of discussion about how to make good pictures. One person uses a north light source, another mixes his media, still another hypnotizes his subjects. But all the while there has been little said about why photographers want to make their pictures in the first place.

In this report I could cover a number of areas and will in passing, but intend to deal most fully with the one that interests me most: motive. Within that topic are a number of interlaced concerns each dependent on the other, and thus difficult to separate and organize.

In 1978 I moved back to my hometown where I had photographed sporadically since 1966, and began a series of photographs that involved me every day. As I worked I found myself posing questions and proposing answers, both of my own making, answers and questions that as far as I was aware, were without reference to mentor or precedent.

This investigation was partly visual but mostly psychological. When I first began to work consciously on these psychological questions, I had read nothing on the subject and thought I had invented it. (I later changed my mind as I found reference to other, similar quests.) As I worked it seemed appropriate that the work should deal directly with the motive that propelled it. A central metaphor emerged. I was wrestling: trying to wring a blessing from

specific people, trying to get right with a vague source, trying to arrive at a state of hardy balance.

Naming Quiet Voices

I worked to arrive at a state of balance with those people and spaces I named with my camera. I searched my environment and myself to locate feelings I was sensitive to and then tried to increase the sensitivity to those feelings. I called them "quiet voices." The slightest distraction would muffle them. I tried to put my finger on an emotion that was totally personal, tried to give it a name, tried to understand it and ultimately act on that understanding by producing a talisman¹ of the experience. I sat on the school steps for hours in 1957 and in 1967 and in 1977 trying to soak up something, to figure it out and to enjoy it. This naming process gave me a chance to identify some personal conflicts and to separate them a bit from my life. Unlike Kane, I found Rosebud after a reasonable search and was able to begin again.

Liberation

The past formed a closure against the present and protected me from it. My value in existence seemed to depend on my art. I made my art from my difficulties and from my past and so my value seemed to depend on maintaining those difficulties and on maintaining my connections with the past. At some point I realized that when I found a source of art in well-being and the present I could enter the realm of well-being and the present. I was frightened by the prospect, yet I

knew it to be necessary, and I knew I would liberate myself from the past only by dealing firmly with it.

Obligation, Calling

Part of the process of liberation, too, had to do with the discharge of a long-standing sense of obligation that I had assumed as one of the characteristics of my relationship with the town that had made so many early contributions to the making of my personality. One is created by one's childhood; as gifts of positive and negative polarity are showered on one over periods of years from dozens of sources, connections are made and debts are incurred. My debts were coming due.

They gave this child more of themselves than that,
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.²

From time to time I had the overwhelming sensation that people were waiting for me to come and make their photographs. Some of the older people couldn't wait. My time was limited. I could only do the really important things, I told myself. Hence my selection mostly of those older people who needed to be caught in time. I photographed personalities that were landmarks in my life and in other people's lives because I knew we would all feel cheated 50 years from now if I did not. I had some call from people in the neighborhood to photograph corpses. People never came to pick up the prints, though. What they wanted was the opportunity to see the old man one last time and to hold him in time, or to assuage some guilt at a photograph not made earlier or a word not spoken earlier. They wanted the opportunity to see the infant for the first and last time. But mostly I made a lot of

photographs of the living. Now when the county paper comes on Thursdays I open to the obituaries as usual, but I don't feel the usual remorse. Even if I haven't made the photograph I intended, I felt as though I had dealt with some important people and issues.

In this business of obligation also was a sense of regard. Once I said, "The parade happens to the town; the photographer happens to the parade." There have been many times when I did not make pictures because I didn't think I had the right. I began to change "right" to "obligation." I began to change "voyeur" to "witness." I remembered people were waiting for me to come. I found that, if the motives were wholesome, they were easy to act on. I wished I could communicate these motives to my subjects, and I did communicate more as time passed. I found some people who, to my relief, understood the seriousness of my regard and the importance of the work we did together without my having to explain it to them.

I chose working methods that were in accord with my sense of regard. I set up appointments by telephone or letter even with people who lived on my street. I scheduled a block of time ranging from an hour to a day to make the pictures. I photographed with simplicity and directness placing the face in the center of the frame. The eyes engaged the lens, proxy for my eyes and yours. With my straightforward methods I hoped to build an historical record of the culture and a monument to the people who were in my child's eyes grand. I believed that my work in Sutton was my particular contribution and, in the words of the Baptist preachers, that I had been called to do this work; I "believed myself chosen."³

Documentation

I thought that Sutton had significance because of its place within the cultural history of the state and the nation. Though it was the wrestling motive that propelled me most, I was also motivated by a desire to produce documents of a microcosm to which I had special access. I saw my value to others in the form of an exhaustive historical record. I felt the work had to have value outside of personal expression or formal art issues and the documentary goal provided that value. I eschewed art for its own sake.⁴

Collecting, Cataloging

If I made documents out of a sense of obligation to my subjects and to history, I also made them out of a need to collect and organize. If a thing had an emotional history, I wanted it: the place where someone once stood, a room where something once occurred. I wanted to order these images in files of contact sheets with places, names and dates noted.

This process of making photographs allowed me to systemize a part of my life. The sight of the subject was overwhelming. Just as correct hospital procedure protects doctors from emotion, I erected a screen of professionalism between myself and what I saw. I established systems, symbols and methods to protect me from a life of pure feeling. I got in line humbly to receive gifts. Many things were out of control. But my files and darkroom were possible to control. When I was alone, I could peacefully order all I had surveyed and collected. Whether working with camera, enlarger or file cabinet I felt I was struggling to structure my visible world. I didn't hang my photographs on my walls,

but I liked to have them close by, to know that they existed and that I could come in contact with them if I needed to. Walker Evans: "It's sort of like collecting."⁵ "It does require a certain arrogance to see and to choose."⁶

Attraction

I was attracted to the people I photographed. When they were in front of my lens they were amazing without having to do anything.

I learned that I already liked the people I wanted to photograph and it was inappropriate to criticize them. I couldn't bring myself to photograph people I didn't like. Conversely I had such extreme regard for some, especially the older ones, and they had such specific, conservative expectations for me, that at times I could not bring myself to photograph at all. Part of the time photographing just seemed socially inappropriate, an invasion of privacy, "an unearned intimacy"⁷, a too-close scrutiny that bordered on criticism. Later I understood what Robert Frank had said, that "criticism can come out of love."⁸ Later, too, I read and agreed with Ugo Mulas: "the more I like the subject the more closely I want to render it."⁹

Detachment

Although I was attracted to them visually, I felt a social separation from the people and things I photographed and that may have emphasized the attraction they held for me. I made an aesthetic issue of the distance between the one seen and the one seeing. Our relationship was not resolved, but we were seeking to resolve it, and the seeking

provided a subtle tension and interest to the photographs that resulted from the process of exploration.

Ben Maddow referred to this detachment as "passion at a distance."¹⁰ Keith Smith said his own picturemaking was motivated by "unrequited love."¹¹ The feeling I referred to in my description of making the Quickle photographs,¹² the sense of aristocracy, is related to this. According to Berger¹³ the aristocrat is looked at but he does not look back. By allowing myself to look, I had given up my chance to be aristocratic (regardless of whether or not I was aristocratic or whether or not being aristocratic was ever desirable). But I remained detached anyway because detached as well is one who looks but does not participate.

Stewardship

The process of working professionally is a trust. The results of the process are held in trust by the photographer. He is steward of the photographs that are the only physical results of a shared experience. The subject of a portrait when he faces the lens faces the future and history. He knows this. As a photographer, steward of the image, I felt a sense of responsibility as I transmitted that image into the future. I tried to present my subjects with dignity in photographs that were simple, direct and authoritative. The photographs were copyrighted to prevent them from being published out of context.

Balance: Objectification, Transformation, Normalization

The process of wrestling was a process of normalization of relations, of arriving at a state of balance. This process often began with

objectification which, like attraction-detachment, was a sword that cut both ways.

. . . The conventions popular in studio portraiture . . . were intended to signify 'personhood' not 'objecthood'. [In the 20's and 30's, Sander's work was ambivalent.] By the 30's and 40's, however, the ambivalence is gone . . . surface--sheer materiality--is equated with desirability--the spiritual element. Depiction of surface becomes a means of spiritualizing material. [emphasis mine.]¹⁴

Through photography, a thought or feeling can become an object and when it does it is subject to the same laws to which other objects are subject. Once an idea or emotion becomes incarnate--attached to a physicality--it can be manipulated like any other object as if it had a physical existence. An example of a simple yet powerful manipulation is the already mentioned power to order.

. . . The power granted to us by the picture is thoroughly unearned and unavoidable. Still, that same culture has habituated us to our superiority over the people it depicts, even when they are objects of common esteem. For the mischief of photographic experience lies in the fact that they've been reduced to objects. Something far more diminished than they are or were in the flesh. . .¹⁵

And even further removed from what they were in the imagination. I had no desire to reduce to objects the people I photographed. I did have a desire to transform into some manageable object the experience of seeing and being with the people I photographed. An imagined relationship, once it was committed to paper, could be studied, understood, altered. I was not in control of my life, so I created symbols and took control of the symbols. I was trying to alter a perceived reality that existed only and could be altered only inside me. One is

created by one's childhood. By recreating one's childhood one recreates (and takes possession of) oneself.

I photographed the Sutton of my desires not the real Sutton, creating a new psychological environment in which to live.

She took her pictures to clarify what happened to her and those she loves, to objectify inward conditions . . .¹⁶ Such photographs . . . serve . . . to demythologize life.

We speak a thought in order to be rid of it. Pure thought is without form. Given form it is allowed to rest. I made photographs of people to dismantle the myths that I had built up around them and to be free to deal with them directly as human beings. The experience of looking at photographs does not resemble the experience those photographs "record", so photographs are ideal tools for circumventing experience.

In the exhibition I used words as a narrative device. As a narrator I was freer to transform and alter, to fictionalize. I was freer of the subject and of assumed truths about it. In photographs and writing, myth became object, then object became re-mythologized.

Memory, Myth and Totem

Some artists cannot deal with the present, so they retreat into a romantic past they have imagined. People from the past are convenient receptors for qualities we want to have existed. The problem then becomes one of dealing with the past. Some artists, myself included, believe that only by entering the past and dealing with its hold on them will they be released, able to enter the future. I might have in the old days photographed to guard against a sense of loss. I now photograph

to enhance the sense of loss I feel. Indeed I photograph in order that I might lose.¹⁷ When I photograph, I neutralize memory and am released. I am released from angel, monument, talisman, totem, legend, dream, magic: all larger than life.

In Day for Night¹⁸ one of the actors, lovesick and twenty, asks the film director "Do you believe that women are magical?" I thought some of the people I photographed were close to being so. I couldn't find a word that precisely expressed that feeling. Totem, something that serves as an emblem or revered symbol, or talisman, an object--marked ceremoniously--that exerts a magical, extraordinary and usually positive influence, come closest but are still not exactly right. I think of the Stonehenge, its original meaning lost, but to which modern man returns for strength, or I think of a particular farmer from whom one buys apples every October and whom one quietly admires. Harold Singleton was the Sunday School superintendent and a power company lineman. I imagined him standing stocky in yellow rubber boots and smiling as electricity ran harmlessly through his body.

In the following passage, Hilton Kramer talks about works of art, but he could be talking about people.

For legends often obscure rather than illuminate the achievements they are created to exalt. So encumbered with adoration and awe are the legend-laden achievements that the task of discovering their true quality comes more and more to resemble the critical equivalent of an archeological dig. Layer upon layer of myth and misunderstanding must be stripped away before the work itself can be accurately perceived and properly experienced.¹⁹

He could have been speaking about my feeling for those who inhabited my childhood. In the act of photographing--of looking across at someone--a symbol, legend or talisman became a real experience. The

shards of that experience were new symbols in the form of pictures. A picture of a talisman became a source for another talisman, but now it was a personal one. I was craftsman and participant in the symbolizing process rather than heir to an existing set of symbols.

Action

Arriving at a balance involved transformation of ideas about the subject through objectification. It also involved transformation of ideas about myself through action. The photographs were shards²⁰ left after combat with intense feelings. The action of making photographs came to have a moral quality²¹ in its fearless and confrontational nature. It often seemed puritanical. I was censuring myself and then purifying myself.²² I worked physically close to my subjects and I worked with them for extended periods in order to intensify the sensation of purification. The fact that Robert Capa's statement, "If your pictures aren't good, you're not close enough,"²³ is so widely quoted may indicate a popular belief that the experience of closeness will cause a change in the heart of the reporter. He has been there. One might argue that the camera served Capa with a pretext for being in the battlefield. He said of Vietnam, "This is going to be a beautiful story."²⁴ Curtis offers another example of the photographer's taking action.

". . . in 1906 Curtis himself actually danced in the snake ceremony."²⁵

In the winter of 1980-81, I made a 900-mile trip from Rochester to Sutton and back in an unheated car with my three year old son. I worked every day. I went to see my high school coach, talked to him

and made some photographs. I also photographed many other people. I felt that I had taken action. I asked Mr. Watson to unload his guns before I made photographs of him with them. I opened the door to Mrs. Moran's porch and made a photograph even though she wasn't home. I asked Mrs. Harris if I could photograph her peeling potatoes and did so even though it made her uncomfortable. Such simple acts; such simple requests; yet so momentous for my subjects and so sacramental for me.

I was pushing at boundaries my subjects had established for human behavior and that had not been crossed in decades if at all. One simply doesn't photograph people who are peeling potatoes. One doesn't photograph people not in one's immediate family. One doesn't make photographs at a rate of 36-72 frames in one hour. One doesn't spend one's whole morning making photographs much less posing for photographs. All this unconventional behavior was occurring while we each were standing on opposite sides of the window of history.

Photography allowed me to define my own role in a variety of situations. The role of photographer was itself a role I created for myself. The kind of photographer that I was had not existed before in that society. I began to value my role as witness to a specific culture. I made photographs. I made notes. I took time out to think and to observe. I took chances. I forced myself to ask questions and to ask permission. I forced myself to go into the gym, the school, the church, the home, the bathroom and the bedroom. I became the witness to willing and unwilling spectacles. I came to believe that people died waiting for my knock on the door. I came to believe that after I had left, people died thinking, "Bobby Cooper has come and

gone. Why wait?" My unwillingness to interject myself into someone else's life--once a liability--became an important part of my work.

Wrestling

In 1968 I naively assumed I could escape from the place. But then it occurred to me that I was the one with the problems, and I was the one with the solutions. The place itself, like one's shadow, is inescapable. Once one has acquired a way to address his fear he can relish it. Before that he lives in mild, unrecognized horror. There seems to be a relationship between the urgency with which one pursues one's work and the force that appears in the results. I tried to work close to the center of my personal urgency.

After each face materialized, it advanced towards me, rushing faster and faster, until it loomed large and terrifying, only to disappear and be supplemented by a new face in the distance. The sequence was repeated over and over. The fear was only relieved when I set up my camera and began photographing each face as it emerged. When I awoke I took the dream as a mandate to photograph the faces I had seen. . . .

That same day, I put my camera on a tripod and walked out onto the Avenue. I was so intimidated by the . . . people . . . I decided to abandon the idea. . . .²⁶

. . . [He had to] go into himself and confront his fears²⁷ . . . [he had] to fail a little to come out the other side.

It is a daily process, never finished.

Exploration

I was trying to understand myself through others by examining my relationships--searching for limits, weighing strengths, making

photographs. As I confronted my subjects and inspected them I began to see that they were alone, too, and as strong as I. I operated right on the physical and psychological barrier.

Much earlier, I had gotten so I could do a pretty good job of photographing what I saw. I would visit someone at home. We would talk for awhile and I would get the urge to make a record. Automatically I would reach for my camera, drop back a few feet, set the aperture, wait a few moments and make a few photographs: precisely timed, interesting to look at, informative, about the outsides of things. But after awhile it wasn't enough.

I wanted to be more than a highly skilled snapshotter making cool records of surfaces that existed over there and of events that were happening over there. What had begun as an emotion ended as a moment, a design. I wanted my world to be spiritually three-dimensional and I wanted to be inside.

Portraits started getting made from very close range--two feet in some cases. People were photographed washing the dishes and that mortified²⁸ some of them. Bruce Davidson said I needed to photograph someone taking a bath, and I would have, but that was beyond the barrier with these particular people. Getting in the door was often an accomplishment. Gibson, Gerwig, Nuzem, Peterson, Watson, Boggs: these were all houses on my street for twenty years, yet I had not been in any of them and would never be in any of them had I not found a reason and invited myself in to explore and photograph.

We all lived in a small town yet people were cut off--so close, so separate. My curiosity was overwhelming. In a dream I was moving slowly through Gibson's house, or Hammack's on a balmy, dry, June

evening. The lights were out but the light was the same inside and outside. No one was home. I was free to absorb the environment. I was where I was not supposed to be.

My home town was someplace I wasn't free to go, to move about. I wanted to swagger freely through that environment.

Taking pictures is seldom the completely appropriate thing to do. If it gets done at all in some circumstances it is because someone is willing to act inappropriately.

I coined a phrase "the white line" to refer to the need expressed by an occasional suburbanite to cross the edge of the road and enter the woods. Werner Herzog could have used a set, but he decided to pull a real boat over a real mountain in Burden of Dream.²⁹ Bruce Davidson heard about East 100th Street,³⁰ supposedly the worse block in the city, and he had to go there; with that accomplished he began photographing in the subway which he said was "a kind of purgatory" and "a metaphor for life."³¹ Mary Ellen Mark spent ten years getting things thrown at her on Falkland Road³² until she found the courage to stay and photograph. People don't like to think there are places they can't go. Especially if one of them is their home town.

Implication

I discovered that the only way to fail was to fail to act. I worried about being a fool--the stereotyped image of the photographer, a man dependent on gizmos that fill the pockets of his baggy pants, unable to respond directly to the world, acting inappropriately in public and in private, futility in pursuit of nothing more valuable or substantial than an image. But I learned that I couldn't become a fool because I already

was a fool as are all of us. I implicated myself further; I became part of the "all of us" through action. I became a first person narrator in the stories I told, a kind of sacred clown. Using mirrors, the photographer Shelby Adams introduced his hands, face and camera into the documentary images he made of his retarded neighbors in the town where he grew up.³³ Max Kozloff suggests that Diane Arbus "felt compelled to implicate [herself] . . . to make herself vulnerable in the photographic act."³⁴

In the photographic act is embodied the question: what am I willing to be responsible for. Accidents are no longer accidental (meaningless) when someone is willing to take responsibility for them. By accepting responsibility for one's images one implicates oneself in the experience that generated them. My feelings on this are summed up by Emmet Gowin's photograph "Dalton Dishman, Ice Carver".³⁵ That photograph tells me art is not efficient. Art is comic, futile, difficult, motivated by compulsion. The results are transient.

Transmission and Reception

The people in my photographs communicated important messages to me. They usually did so in their own language--one that is reticent, encoded, subject to interpretation by someone who knows the same code and therefore subject to misinterpretation (hence my reluctance to reveal them in print, still another code, another intermediation) or even to non-interpretation. Following their example, I took the opportunity of photographing people in a portrait sitting as an occasion for transmitting certain information to them. I told a secret; I asked a question. Like Arnold Newman who, when photographing Harry

Truman, said, "Mr. President, why'd you drop the bomb?"³⁶, I asked my coach why he dismissed me twenty years earlier. I told a friend of my father's about certain unspoken trusts I betrayed. There were no satisfactory answers to the questions. The responses to the secrets were without moment. But the sharing was valuable and healthy. The warp and weft that weaves together the characters in the drama of a small town are infinitely complex, yet so little direct communication occurs outside some deliberate, almost impolite effort of this kind.

Connection

In Bergman's film Shame³⁷ there is a war. Colonel Jacobi knows he is going to die. He bargains the money the woman needs for passage to freedom in return for a moment with her in the greenhouse. I know I am going to die, too, so I bargain for a moment with you in the greenhouse . . .

In making films I am no longer the solitary observer,
turning away after the click of the shutter.³⁸

Question: Do you get to know people a little before you photograph them?"

Answer: I get to know them through the process of photographing them. It's an intense experience to share.³⁹

Passing through the garden only once and briefly I was and am in need of a way to fully connect with it, to wring a blessing out of awareness. Even the stories I wrote on the gallery walls and even the photographs of the river had connection as their intent. In fact, it seems too much to ask of the camera that it be a way to touch a life. It seems impossible to touch another life let alone enter it.

The art process and particularly the etiquette of photographic portraiture legitimize a long, careful look--a look of sensuous enjoyment, a look of scrutiny, a staredown in rare cases. Like looking at Medusa in the mirror, photographs allow us to look at what we cannot look at.

And photography, the world in which the picture is made, like the dream world, is a place where we can work out scenarios not possible in our other world. By setting up a photograph I was setting up the conditions for making contact on terms that were acceptable to me. I could not in the context of that person's world blurt out "I admire you!" But once I had established my world around us I could in effect do that.

In the 1950's professional portrait photographers came to the Midway, a seedy hotel in the middle of town. My mother took me there to be photographed. The photographers had greasy hair, patent leather shoes that were down at the heel and 500 watt floods with 20" spun glass diffusers over them. In a darkened back room they used drapes and armrests to establish an environment. In any other context they would not have been able to set the pace, to define the time frame, to study my face, to direct me, to touch me. They were on the fringe just as I, and, just as I, they desired to be more intimately involved with people than ordinary people are allowed to be. But the involvement was to be only momentary. There was an air of sophistication about them at the same time they were shabby. They came from outside, and they seemed to barely touch earth before leaving again. I never saw any of them outside the studio. I seldom saw any of them more than once.

I cannot know the true motives of the Midway photographers. In contrast Sally Stein gives some insight into the motives of Jacob Riis. For his publications Riis consistently chose images in which people were looking away from the camera to emphasize that

consciousness resided exclusively on the side of the photographer. [The photographs] represented a unilateral power relationship. The result provided his audience with a supremely privileged space in which to indulge its voyeuristic impulses.⁴⁰

About 1978 it occurred to me that if the subject looked back, a mirror effect would obtain. The distancing of Riis would be replaced by a unification between subject and photographer, between subject and audience--implication, connection. By late 1978 I had become a first person narrator. I was in the story.

Summary

An artist is in danger when he writes about his own work: he can muddy the water; he can give false clues; he can sap energy from the process of work. He can also punctuate the work giving himself permission to start a new phrase or clause.

So now, how does one summarize what has essentially been a summary? Since photography quotes from the world, and since one important lesson of the thesis has been the discovery that I was not alone in my searching, and since I am weary of talking about myself, it seems appropriate that I would cite some of those who shared the effort I once thought uniquely mine.

This volume grew out of my preoccupation with a past I had experienced as a child, but⁴¹ never fully possessed. Fiction was an act of repossession.

Photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal [and] help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure.⁴²

The purpose of the ritualistic making of photographs for a family album is not to reveal random truths but to sanctify experience. . . . History is more a product of emotional necessity than it is a repository of facts; as time slips away from us it leaves behind a residue of feeling, not fact, and that is what we remember. . . . We are often driven toward a wish, toward the ideal, and the paradoxical nature of the photograph--both detailed and vague, both real and indeterminate in meaning--allows us to use it to repossess the past on its own terms.⁴³

Given that I have said that the most urgent work comes from the cauldron of self-doubt and self-exploration I also felt able on January 9, 1982 to enter the following in my journal:

Each action must be founded on a deep, personal sense of security, a belief in my judgement and a belief in the person I am photographing. Anything else will produce inaction or action resulting undesirably.

I was in the middle of printing my show; the thesis effort was coming into its maturity and I was apparently reaching the balance I had sought through it.

. . . The closing of the shutter is a death sentence, a guillotining of the moment.⁴⁴ It is best left in the hand of a man at peace with himself.

Once I spent my time playing tough-guy scenes
But I was living in a world of childish dreams
Someday these childish dreams must end
To become a man and grow up to dream again. . .⁴⁵

In June, 1983 I had a dream. I was standing under a sycamore tree on the bank behind the Grace Harris house on Laurel Street where I played as a kid. In the dream, though not in reality, Elk River was a hundred feet below. Some street kids about fifteen years old came

up to me slowly through the dusty woods. One of them was about my size and coloring when I was his age. He was wearing a red Woolrich jacket like the one I had when I was fifteen. Maybe their presence was merely threatening. Maybe the kids tried to rough me up or rob me; I can't remember. I picked up the kid in the jacket and threw him down the bank and into the river below.

END

ENDNOTES

¹I use the word talisman to refer to a charm, souvenir or touchstone that is marked by intense experience and that can serve as an aid in future encounters. I am using the word to refer to an object which is formed on the wheel of action, fired in the kiln of experience, and which is capable of serving as an amulet, prayerbox or medicine bag when the experience or similar experience is again to be encountered by the artist. Stoneware pottery is safe in the hot oven of the baker (350-450 degrees Fahrenheit) because it has endured the even hotter oven of the potter (2300 degrees Fahrenheit). My entire thesis is expressed in this paradoxical idea: to be protected from fire, one must encounter fire. To be protected from experience, one must encounter experience. For more on "talisman" see The Third New International Dictionary, page 2333.

²Walt Whitman, "There was a Child Went Forth," Walt Whitman: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose and Letters, Emory Holloway, ed. (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1967), p. 332.

³Wright Morris, Wright Morris: Photographs and Words/Untitled 29, (Carmel, California: The Friends of Photography, 1982), p. 8.

⁴"Architecture begins with form and form begins with gesture...a group of farm buildings that has developed, over the years, shed by shed, barn by barn, in response to need and growth, when done with care and craftsmanship, is almost always a greater aesthetic success than a collection of structures that in their total are preconceived and designed. When aesthetics alone are the *raison d'etre*, the aesthetic results are almost invariably less." Ivan Chermayeff, Observations on American Architecture, (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), pp. 21 and 105.

⁵Walker Evans in Lincoln Caplan, ed. "Walker Evans on Himself," The New Republic, Vol. CLXXIV, (November 13, 1976), p. 24.

⁶Walker Evans in Leslie Katz, "Interview with Walker Evans," Art in America, Vol. LIX, No. 2, (March-april, 1971), p. 86.

⁷Richard Avedon in an unpublished interview with Connie Goldman on National Public Radio during the late 1970's. (Audio tape in the author's collection.)

⁸Robert Frank, Creative Camera, No. 164, (February, 1978), p. 40.

⁹Ugo Mulas in Ulrich Keller, "Ugo Mulas: Verifications," Afterimage, (May, 1980), p. 13.

- ¹⁰Ben Maddow, Faces, (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), p. 333.
- ¹¹"Smith openly acknowledges that the photographs are substitutes for actual physical contact. They are poems of unrequited love." Charles Desmaris, ed. The Portrait Extended, (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1980), p. 44.
- ¹²See the text of the thesis exhibition as documented in the installation photographs with this report.
- ¹³"You are observed with interest but you do not observe with interest--if you do, you will become less enviable." John Berger, Ways of Seeing, (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p. 133. On pages 133 and 147 Berger further refines his definitions of the terms aristocrat, bureaucrat, envy and glamour.
- ¹⁴James Hugunin, "Fetish Flexing," Afterimage, (December, 1981), p. 23.
- ¹⁵Max Kozloff, Photography and Fascination, (New York: Addison House, 1979), p. 27.
- ¹⁶Lawrence Weider, "Transparent States: Photographs by Eva Rubenstein," Camera Arts, Vol. II, (March-April, 1982). "The photograph is not reality; it is a shadow of a moment from life. And the reason you photograph something at all is for the transformation that occurs." Emmet Gowin, Contemporary Artist at Work: Photographers I, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovitch, 1979). "The conditions for a passionate life existed, but I had to destroy them to be able to recuperate them." Alighiero Boetti in Germano Celant, Art Povera, (New York: Prager 1969), p. 156.
- ¹⁷Because the photograph is assumed to be a memory device, the power of photography to ease or erase memory is often overlooked. Theroux tells the story of a photographer who is trying to decide whether or not to do a portrait. His subject wisely admonishes him with these words: "Let this be your first memory". Paul Theroux, "Greene," The Atlantic, Vol. CCXLI, No. 4, pp. 92-97. The story is an excerpt from Paul Theroux, Picture Palace, (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1978), p. 17-32. Morris remembers: "Perhaps an hour later, raining much harder, I passed a field where, a harness-patched plow horse, white as Moby Dick, stood luminous in a piece of over-grazed pasture, his heavy head bowed. I should have stopped to photograph it. That I did not is why I have forever borne it so vividly in my mind." Morris, p. 32. Robinson, without any direct reference to photography, talks about longing in general: "...need can blossom into all the compensation it requires...when do our senses know anything so utterly as when we lack it...whatever we lose, very craving gives it back to us again." Marilynne Robinson, Housekeeping, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), pp. 152-153.

¹⁸Francois Truffaut, Day for Night, Sam Flores, tr. (New York: Grove Press, 1975). Also see Annette Insdorff, "Are women Magic," Francois Truffaut, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), pp. 105-145.

¹⁹Hilton Kramer, "Photography as High Art," Review of Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs and Writings, New York Times Book Review, (December 19, 1982), p. 1. In doing the thesis exhibition, I was aware that photographs are not perceived in a vacuum. Every picture carries with it preconceptions particular to it and general to the history of art. What the viewer knows of the history of western art is in my portfolio box along with what he knows about me as a person and what he knows about West Virginia as a place. I attempted to use the power of supplementary information by integrating with the photographs my own fiction, non-fiction, family photographs, historical photographs from Sutton, a letter and Bible quotations as well as copies of pages from George Arthur Buttrick, et al., eds. The Interpreter's Bible, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953).

²⁰The word shards emphasizes the nature of the photographs as by-products of the main event. The photographs are a kind of schrapnel.

²¹Jacob encountered the angel in combat as a part of his homecoming pilgrimage through which he was attempting to get right with God. For a further explanation of the fascinating and complex story of Jacob, see Buttrick, Vol. I, pp. 710-732.

²²"Within the ordinances themselves [for example baptism by immersion and especially foot washing] there is no inherent power. The worshiper, in his participation in them, places himself in a state of humility where he can receive both a spiritual blessing and serve his fellowman to God's glory." Richard Humphrey, "Biblical Ordinances Found in the Southern Appalachian Region," Mountain Review, Vol. V, No. 1, (July, 1979), p. 6.

²³John Szarkowski, The Photographer's Eye, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966). This legendary statement was reported as, "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough," in Cornell Capa, ed, The Concerned Photographer, (New York: Grossman, 1968).

²⁴Cornell Capa and Bhupendra Karia, eds., ICP Library of Photographers, Vol. I: Robert Capa, (New York: Grossman, 1974), p. 111.

²⁵Mike Gidley, "From the Hopi Snake Dance to the 'Ten Commandments': Edward S. Curtis as Filmmaker," Studies in Visual Communication, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (Summer, 1982), p. 72. Also see Edward S. Curtis: The Shadow Catcher, (Washington: PBS Video, 1976).

²⁶Richard Misrach, Telegraph 3 A.M.: The Street People of Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, California, (Berkeley: Cornucopia Press, 1974), from the afterword.

²⁷Eleanor Coppola, Notes, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 180.

²⁸West Virginia vernacular for "shocked to death" or "chagrined".

²⁹Les Blank, Burden of Dreams, Flower Films, 1982. And Werner Herzog, Fitzcarraldo, European International, 1982. Burden of Dreams is a documentary film about the making of the theatrical film Fitzcarraldo. In the process of making the film Fitzcarraldo, director Werner Hertzog daringly, some say foolishly ignored the advice of his staff engineer in pulling with block and tackle and native labor, a huge steamboat up a very steep incline. Since this feat was not cinematically necessary, one is safe in assuming that the act of working in this way had some special significance for the director.

³⁰Bruce Davidson, Bruce Davidson: Photographs, (New York: Agrinde Publications, 1978), pp. 12-13.

³¹Bruce Davidson, The William A. Reedy Memorial Lecture, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, 1980, unpublished.

³²Mary Ellen Mark, Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), pp. 11-12.

³³Wendy Ewald, ed., Appalachia: A Self Portrait, (Frankfort, Kentucky: Gnomon Press, 1979).

³⁴Max Kozloff, "Report from Venice: Notes on 'Photography '79'," Art in America, (November, 1979), p. 45.

³⁵Emmet Gowin, Emmet Gowin: Photographs, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 37. (The full title is "Dalton Dishman, Icecarver, Danville, Virginia, 1970)."

³⁶Arnold Newman, The William A. Reedy Memorial Lecture, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, 1981, unpublished.

³⁷Ingmar Bergman, Persona and Shame, Keith Bradfield, tr., (New York: Grossman, 1972). The film was called Skammen in Swedish and was released in 1968.

³⁸Robert Frank, The Lines of My Hand, (New York: Lustrum, 1972).

³⁹Mary Ellen Mark, an unpublished lecture at Daytona Beach Community College, Daytona Beach, Florida, February, 1983.

⁴⁰Sally Stein, "Making Connections with the Camera: Photography and Social Mobility in the Career of Jacob Riis," Afterimage, Vol. X, No. 10, (May, 1983), p. 14.

⁴¹Wright Morris in Chris Albasio, "Book Reviews," Exposure 21:2, 1983, p. 31.

⁴²Susan Sontag, On Photography, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 9.

⁴³James C.A. Kaufman, "Learning from the Fotomat," The American Scholar, Vol. XLIX, No. 2, (Spring, 1980), pp. 244-246.

⁴⁴Attributed to Bill Brandt.

⁴⁵Bruce Springsteen, "Two Hearts," The River, (New York: Columbia Records, 1980).

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Appendix I

Procedure

Technique and Attitude

As I mentioned in the body of my report my choice of equipment and materials and the way I used them reflected my attitude toward my work as a whole. Black and white was chosen for its permanence as a document and for its ability to walk the boundary between transparency and transformation. In order to be physically close to my subjects and at the same time place them within their supportive environment, I used medium and short focus lenses. All the photographs in the show were made with existing light. I operated within the confines of the manufacturer's recommendations (more or less), from experience and with a seat-of-the-pants understanding of familiar materials. I felt that my technique should be inaudible because the characteristics I sought in the lives of the subjects were almost inaudible and so easy to drown out.

Precedents

I drew from the photographers mentioned above. I also felt a kinship with the itinerant photographers who documented West Virginia between 1880 and 1920, as well as Disfarmer, Sander, the Kinseys, and the others who spent many years working on extended documents of a single place or an idea they were close to. Because of his investigation of family and community I also feel very close to Emmet Gowin. My indebtedness to these photographers is not only visual but procedural and spiritual.

Board Contact & Advice

Over a period of four or five months I met with my thesis board every three weeks for two hours and showed new prints and written material for the show as well as frequently reworked concepts for use of the visual and verbal material. Overlapping this period I was also showing work to Nathan Lyons on a regular basis. The advice I was getting from him and from Brad Hindson was amazingly coincident. For example, as the work evolved they both advised larger prints and the addition of text. Their similar suggestions often came within a few days of one another even though they were not comparing notes. I had decided at the outset to throw myself open to the suggestions of my advisors, and I do not regret that decision. (Thesis diary, January 1982: "I wanted something grand, finished and impersonal, but I am making something small, tentative, personal.")

Exhibition Statistics

The show was installed in thirty-one hours. We (in addition to myself the installation crew consisted of Brad Handson, Carol Cloos, Constance McCabe, Steve Piper, Julie Gelfand, Mark Simolo, and Gerald "Chip" Hoffman without whose help the installation would not have been possible and to whom I am grateful) wrapped the gallery floor-to-ceiling in light grey seamless paper. Using map pins with small, round ceramic heads we pinned to the wall one-hundred and nine photographs that we had chosen from about three hundred and fifty I had enlarged. They ranged in size from 16x20 borderless to a 3½x3½ drugstore print taken by my mother. Eight of the photographs were made by family, friends or anonymous itinerant photographers. Sixty were made by me

since I came to R.I.T. Forty-one were made by me before I came to R.I.T., the earliest from 1967. The text, about 8,000 words, was written on the seamless in my hand with a felt-tipped pen. A few of the passages were composed extemporaneously. Most were worked out in advance. The completed show was open to the public for four days in May of 1982. In August of 1982 I returned to Sutton and gave more than 300 prints to the people in the photographs.

Appendix II

A Statement of Purpose
from
Application to Graduate School
Spring, 1980

ROBERT COOPER
A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

For several years I have been doing portraits and quiet architectural interiors in order to explore formal questions but more importantly as a vehicle for expressing my personal emotions toward a place-- my home town of Sutton, West Virginia and the surrounding area. I am trying to express my feelings about my social background as it is embodied in the people and landscape of rural, central West Virginia. Distinct from self-expression, I am expressing how I feel about something outside myself, and simultaneously I am documenting the subject. In contrast, pure self-expression would rule out my being a medium through which the room or the person might express itself to the audience. I care about the subject and the audience reaction to it.

My subjects here in central West Virginia have responded well to my work and to the photographs I have made of them, but I need a more sophisticated, more educated criticism. I have been trying to find a balance between the personal and the universal. But, isolated as I am, I have not been able to gauge audience reaction to my work and so have had to guess at the point at which my personal symbolism is comprehensible to others (especially to those outside rural Appalachia).

In the past I have dealt in the personal more than the universal and in subject-oriented values more than formal values. I imagine the audience prefers the opposite; therefore, communication requires both. I have asked myself this question: How is photography best adapted to the communication (to a general audience) of specific personal experience?

Cooper--two

Most recently I have been working with groups of images. Each of the images in a sequence plays off the others like separate strings in one emotional chord, like lines in a stanza. To rearrange them or to eliminate one changes the meaning. Several photographs are seen as if they were one photograph. Sometimes words might be added to prepare the viewer for seeing a sequence of photographs. I ask myself a second question: How can sequencing enhance communication? My answers to this second question are at a primitive stage, and so the present portfolio is not edited with sequencing in mind but is presented as a cross section of my work since the late 1960's with an emphasis on what I am now doing, i.e.: "personal documentary". However, the statement below, which appeared with my one-person show at The Cultural Center, State Capitol, Charleston, West Virginia, from February 20 to April 6, 1980, may help someone viewing my photographs to better understand the problems I have set for myself and the degree to which they are resolved in my recent work:

Central to the work of a photographer is his subject and his attitude toward it. Several years ago I chose subjects almost exclusively in central West Virginia because the place is such a vital part of me. My attitudes toward the area were closely tied to my early years in Sutton and were often in conflict. I found that in order to photograph I first had to understand fears and emotions I had avoided earlier. Once understood, I found in the process of photography an opportunity to confront these emotions. Once confronted, my conflicting feelings were reconciled. I now look at the place directly, accepting and appreciating what I see.

I know this place well enough to understand it. I understand it well enough to sympathize with it. I am of it. We share the same flaws, the same virtues.

During that earlier period of conflicting feelings toward my

Cooper--three

background, I also had conflicting feelings about photography itself. I thought of photography as cruel, deceitful and exploitative. Some interpretations of the work of several contemporary photographers, for instance, Arbus, Winogrand, Avedon or Frank, might easily leave one with that impression. Partly to break out of this attitude I began using a 4x5 view camera for portraits because with a 35mm in my hand, I felt embarrassingly predatory and all-powerful. Later I began to think of photography as something good to do for someone-- a handshake, a hello, and embrace. It says, "I like you, and I'd like for you to live forever".

Before I could think of graduate school and the teaching career to which it leads, these earlier conflicts had to be resolved. The fact that I took the time to resolve these problems explains in part the relatively long delay between college and graduate school in my case. I also needed time to prepare my self to be willing to be employed outside of West Virginia. I may be able to find work here, but I am now prepared to leave if necessary. And of course, my having resolved those lingering conflicts from the past helps make this preparedness and the eventual leave-taking possible emotionally. I have spent half a lifetime here and I expect the area will continue to be an important subject. I leave reluctantly but I believe the trip will be worthwhile. Short periods of separation in the past have clarified my vision, and I have reason to believe that I will return someday to do more work.

In summary, I have found a direction but need help in refining its expression and in understanding what my ideas mean to others. I feel the need to submit to the discipline necessary to raise my work to a professional level.

Appendix III
Thesis Proposal
Fall, 1981

Thesis Proposal

Title: Wrestling with Angels

Robert Cooper, candidate for the degree of Master of Fine
Arts in Photography

Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, New York

Purpose:

To prepare an exhibition of photographs I have made near my home in rural West Virginia.

Background:

I have been exploring the use of photography as a means of establishing an arena for self exploration within the context of my social history and as a means of self-defining action within that context. In the role of photographer, a role I created for myself, I have established contact with family, neighbors, teachers, school mates and environments that would otherwise have been left behind yet which would have stayed with me as half-formed, ghost-like and poorly understood influences.

An integral part of my photographic self exploration is an effort to understand the society that is my background. West Virginia itself is legendary and filled with myths about an earlier America. When I began work there in the late 1960's, I dealt with the material as frankly legendary. In the late 1970's, I came to handle the material more directly but still with awe; I was wrestling with angels as it were. Then in the summer of 1981 I found myself looking across at the culture and its inhabitants and dealing with them as my equals. I breathed a sigh of relief. Edmund Wilson said he felt as if all his old ghosts had been laid to rest. All of mine had not, but I felt as if I had quieted some of the stronger ones and made a peace with them.

My thesis exhibit will be a culmination, a door closed on an old world. It will be a punctuation mark in a sentence that needs to pause before it can go on.

Procedure:

Since enrolling at R.I.T. in the Fall of 1980, I have made three trips to West Virginia and have spent seven weeks there shooting the thesis. Prior to that I was an Artist-in-Residence for two years which involved doing my personal work about 10 hours per week in West Virginia. Prior to the Residency and since 1967, I have been intensely involved in photographing West Virginia. I intend to draw on the photographic material I have accumulated. At the time of this writing I have about 100 rolls of 35mm film and 150 sheets of 4x5 film (as yet unprocessed) that I exposed during my trip in August 1981.

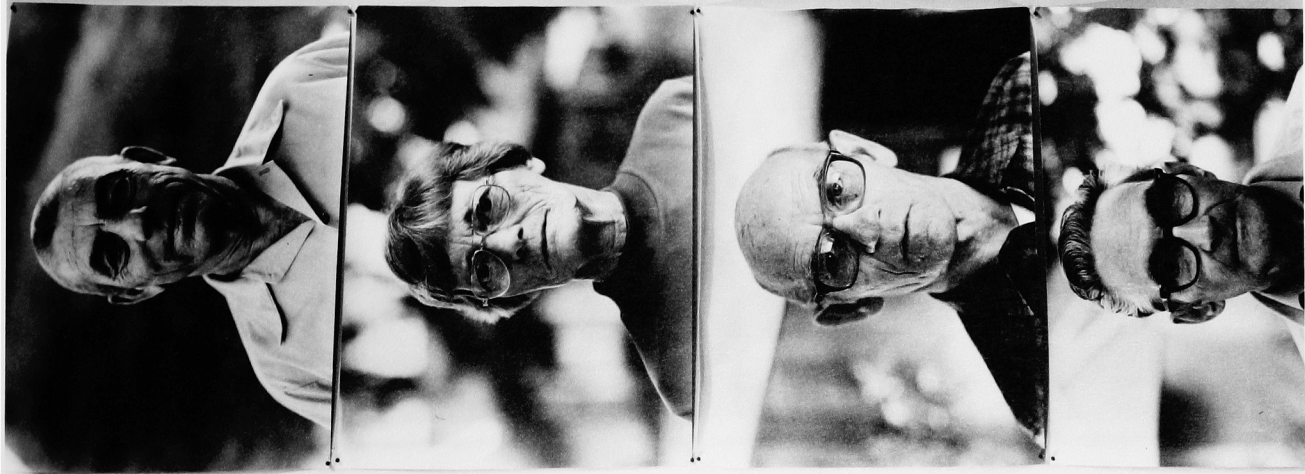
My remaining thesis efforts will involve developing and proofing this work, editing it, making enlargements, integrating the current work with that of the past and sequencing it for exhibition.

My report will be drawn from my thesis diary and from my reading and will briefly attempt to place my work within the context of the history of the confrontational portrait and within the context of what Bruce Davidson calls the Voyage of Self Discovery. My exhibition will be a kind of visual ship's log of my voyage.

Edmund Wilson, Upstate: Records and Recollections of Northern New York, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971). Also noted in Nicholas Sapiaha, "Twilight," Camera Arts, (July, 1981), p. 118.

Appendix IV

Installation Documents



These photos were taken in the
early 1970s, when the
first of the four men
were in the
army. The other three
were in the
navy.

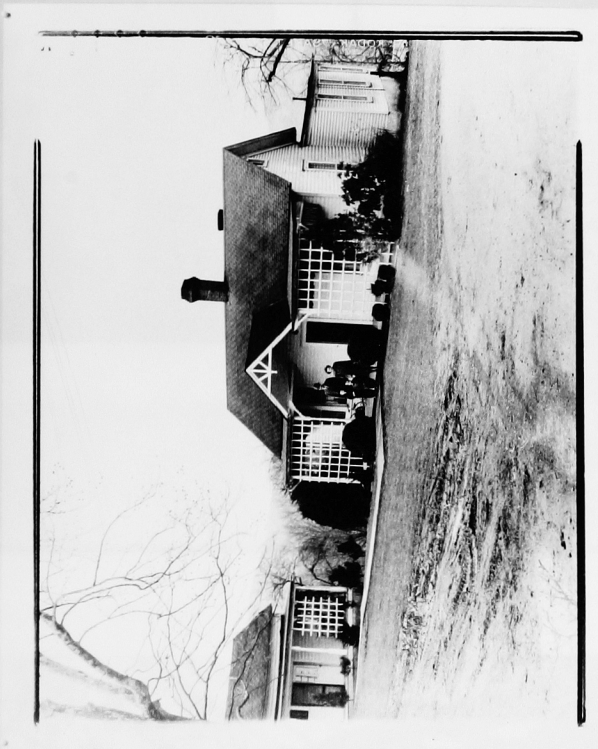
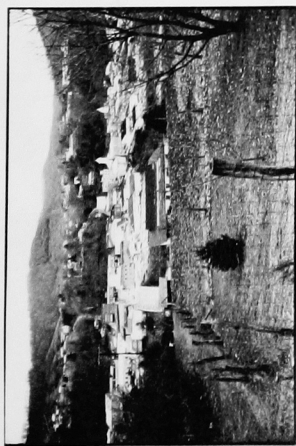






Introduction:

Sutton is a small town (pop. 412) in Brackley County in Central West Virginia. I was born there in 1947 & lived for 20 years in this neighborhood. If a person spends that many years in a small town, & if those years are the first years of his life, he knows a sense of obligation that a lifetime cannot discharge. In my case there has been a sense of ambivalence, too: of wanting to stay & of needing to go. Yet no thing remains strong - no other town is good enough for me & no other photograph is good enough for Sutton.



"Taken by Sutton (Sutton), 1952"





① Jacob - wrestling with the angel.

In the 32nd Chapter of Genesis, Jacob has been living in a foreign land, a successful man but self-exiled because as a youth he had cheated his brother Esau of his birthright. The prophesied night to become patriarch of the Israeli Nation, Jacob wants a redemption he can find only by coming home & meeting his brother face to face. He seeks reconciliation but fears violence. For the safety of his tribe he scatters them into two bands & takes the further precaution of sending gifts of cattle & sheep to appease Esau. Then Jacob camps alone by the river Jabbok near a place where he hopes to meet his brother the next day. In the night he is visited by an angel of the Lord:

24 ¶ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.



Though Jacob was injured, neither party clearly dominated. The angel wanted to quit Jacob would not. He had come home to receive a decisive experience & would not leave without it. He had a powerful need to get right with God.

26 And he said, Let me go for the day, because I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

The angel blessed Jacob & gave him a new name, Israel.

30 ... I have seen God face to face & my life is preserved.

Later that day Esau receives his brother without bitterness.



"25 And... he saw that he prevailed not against him..." Let when Jacob gave the place a special new name because.

③ When it came time to put down the big tree in the front yard, I wanted to be ready.

The Braxton County Homecoming is a shabby little affair to which Braxton Countyans return from all over the county every Labor Day Sunday. It's unlike school & family reunions in that no one tries to impress with the effects of success & anyone of all is liable to show up in a tee shirt & slacks or not in the clouds of some lady's dress & long blonde hair & suit.

After all this is the land of self-effacement.

For me the homecoming is a catalog of all the things in to-day & a testing ground for the new ideas & emotions

About Braxton County I thought about myself that I had evaded over the years, but in every summer I see land before me the stuff that fascinated my Uncle Kaddy & I've had before me. I use a camera to memory that considerable set of individual souls.

As time went on, the ground here and the things got a lot. When I started photographing there in 1967, I was a simpleton. I knew a little about How-Charles Brown, I had read an article in *Appalachian Photography* by Ralph Hutterback & Tom Thomsen called "Backlash to 'Heart of Braxton'" or how to photograph people, I said to be as best as I could, I quit as possible to "shoot" around in the second person, I learned from the source, I mean from the the source. Being an innocent 20 years of age, being in my effort to be Braxton & non-Braxtonians.

I was amazed at what was going on. I'd fire, I was really, through my technique was better. I didn't have any technical skill, regarding the subject, except perhaps curiosity. I am now convinced that many of my



class of pictures were from that time. Rather than my doing the controlling force that made the pictures was inspired by them about how to see my fellow Braxtonians.

Unhappily I wasn't paying enough attention to those early second-prizes, because about 1967, I saw a copy of *The Americans* & I began to study that. Later the work of Diane Arbus began to appear in a Swiss photo magazine I was taking.

At this time young people everywhere were accepting a positive & affectionate. Gradually I was looking among the adults & young people in its place came "Swiss Restaurant and one night clear left." I was receiving messages from a variety of new sources & they all seemed to be saying the same thing - that place people of our nation were like the people of the American family & homecoming, one desperate & comic.

At least that was the message I heard & found hard to act on. I was not alone to feel this way though. I find it interesting to be declassified & anti-intellectual. The world as going to hell in a hand basket & Frank, Lewis, Eliot & I had to sound as going on at the very least. I set myself up as an author of facts. I wrote all sorts of weird statements about my mission in life & art. I was on the fringe & found it ridiculous. There was one simple success - that even if only modestly so.

I took poses & gave photographs each year not knowing why.

This moved into the early 1970's and I became quite disgusted with myself in these activities. I began photographing only people very close to me, people who were important to me & I decided to take the picture. I remember being at an Arbus craft fair & being very disappointed in myself in my attempt to photograph without a clear & beautiful motive. It was just, right, work or the being that meant that I would never photograph like that again.

I continued to photograph people I knew or I did not photograph at all. My art failed, all, an expert photographer. Said "Your pictures are too pretty." I was about this but had determined not to force myself to do what did not feel right.

Then one summer evening in 1971 I had a long conversation with Wendy, a young woman who had used her photography to come to grips with her past as a member of the upper middle class in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. It was a mutual friend of ours & he had done the same thing in Charleston, West Virginia. Another of our friends, Shelly, was similarly involved in Leitch County, Kentucky.

plenty of reason to criticize. I also felt at that time that there were the very things that Frank & Julius had so acerbically criticized. I thought that Frank's 'broken' neurosis was to put themselves above their match by inspecting them & finding them lacking. But as I studied the memoirs, I realized they were post-critiquing in a publicistic or celebratory or mostly, strength & vitality. They were the pride & envy of those who watched. They are showcasing their awes out to the crowd & saying, "hey, look at me," in order to feel that I'm beautiful, I'm beautiful, I'm beautiful. I wanted to change places with them.

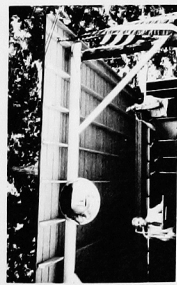
I realized further that this is the same behavior that is studied & connected by anthropologists. When considering the chance to disagree at a cherished moment when it occurs in foreign countries & prominent societies. What we learn from their studies is that most human behavior is universal though it may not seem so at first. What to one person may appear as pathetic may be to its fellowed the testimony of a great hope in which a strong personal dream is stirred. What was willing to criticize one nation that extended to people who simply did not possess the anxiety that possessed it that prevented me from exhibiting but not from harboring the very things I criticized.

realizing / was observing something / should realize
I don't, and the matter became ^{was} the matter, I
knowingly or not. If you were depending on me to win
then I've, "made" as many as they could. They
politeness now seemed appropriate. I did not particu-
larly long. A point after before was occurring. I was
interested in each other's destiny.

I began to listen to an old woman whom earlier had considered purposeless & whom as a result was shunned. And I stood for hours. The longer I stood the more sure she was, & the more appreciated the more interesting she became. She was repeating herself I was not boring as I dove into her life.

Point? How am I going to feel about how I have treated a person afterwards?
is good? One cannot receive a relationship. I exchange "pots" for "Entenbrot" + "Kup".

in the house of Mrs. Long, after self-appointing conversation, it became clear to me at the first time that was both too polite & too laishe because I had never come to grips with what was photographic. Soberly, I left my subjective growth in regard to other times / was frightened & unconsciously content of them. I decided that the only way out of this confusion of vision (if there was a way out) was through it. In 1970 I moved back to my hometown of my old neighborhood - fearful I would not like it. I got my ~~first~~ a decision in a cellar house & went out with my view camera about every day. After several weeks at this kind of involvement I began to see a quality in my garden I had never seen before & did not fully understand.



1993

1999

a short time. I took a week off to read 'new' reviews of Robert Hargrove's *Environing*.
 I spoke to Photographic People in a bookstore in Charlotte. I glanced at the lists. One
 of participants was one of illustrative motives for photographing people. The two lists were
 only slightly dissimilar. The photographs at the time being the only things that separated
 them. I remember that one of the legitimate reasons was to show people in a valuable
 that you were attracted to them. Another was to overcome ignorance of them. Just seeing them in
 print was a precious experience.

Each home I picked up a copy of Daniel's Death by Ernst Becker that a friend had given me a few years earlier. Becker was saying that all men are alive in their awareness of their own mortality & in their need to ~~also~~ know it in order to function outside of despair. He was saying that everyone was more or less neurotic. (There are too kinds of people, the preacher said "the saved & sinners & the unsaved sinners.") & the neuroses is the primary system for defining mortality. The compulsive stamp collector is the flak. Islamism came to mind. And the photograph. None of these activities had ever identified an neuroses but to me, now they became known as spiritual neuroses. I came to think of photography & other compulsive & not acceptable behavior as healthy neuroses.

At a Christmas party a few days later I was speaking to the mothers of the absent children they were to do. I was left out of this RAH RAH crowd in high school & so had



1999 Christmas Parade

I began to listen to an old woman whom earlier had considered purposeless & whom as a result was shunned. And I stood for hours. The longer I stood the more sure she was, & the more appreciated the more interesting she became. She was repeating herself I was not boring as I dove into her life.

Point? How am I going to feel about how I have treated a person afterwards?
is good? One cannot receive a relationship. I exchange "pots" for "Entenbrot" + "Kup".

through this, listening, reading, working, observing & thinking, my life began to change. I began to ask what sort of texture I wanted for the rest of my life. Certainly not the old, dark text of Frank & Arbus. Lighter or not I was accurate in my assessment of what they had achieved. No one was looking at my work any way. No one depended on it except me & the people I depicted & then not so very much. I was free to move & change. I realized I wanted to do something of myself & something of them, & this "portrait" shot I had transformed in the collision of work & thought into "appreciation" was what I had to offer. When I realized I could be appreciative I asked "why go against it?"

My life had a new texture & this was revealed in the work. Shadows opened up. People were looked directly at the camera, & on those faces encountered the lens we said yes to each other - observed & observed. We were saying, both, "this is what we have to offer." During my first period, over a period of weeks I felt a sense of light knowing that my life would never be the same. It made me understand for the first time in a small & specific way what the Baptists had meant when they talked about salvation. I felt I had been saved from the life of dark, harsh emotion into which I had drifted.

When I returned to the homecoming ~~that~~ now I was dizzy. I was surrounded by everything I loved, I was able to appreciate everything I saw in some way. My work has continued to change & now I can ~~appreciate~~ even embrace some things in the individual that I present in the society as a whole may not be grandly accepted. Perhaps this is where Frank & Arbus were all along. Frank did say criticism can come out of joy. Not every time does every participant sense any joy or relief. Sometimes we sense away feelings though we had made contact & wanted. And that seemed good & better.



1961



1961



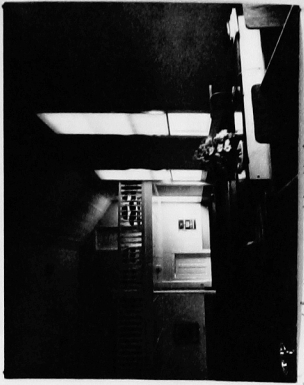
1960



Edith Davis
 1940-1941
 1942-1943
 1944-1945



① When I was a kid my mother had me regularly to the
 Lutheran Baptist Church. Old women, the men, they would hang
 on me & say I had no more. I thought I would be with
 them in heaven, but I couldn't because I wasn't saved. I
 passed up plenty of chances to go to church to be saved. I would
 sit in the back of the church behind a wall to pray &
 listen to the pastor's call for the women to come forward.
 I thought that I thought to me, calling to me personally, but
 I didn't come forward, because I didn't see Christ calling.
 Only the pastor. To some women would have been
 an inspiration. I just couldn't see myself in that place
 I wanted to be in the Church. Well, I still don't & I feel
 in the waiting women.



When I returned in 1977 to photograph me, I found me facing a great fear. She was doing so
 close to the wall, with great courage. In the congregation I found a group of people, I had called
 been more so, than I had before, against which I had called them out. But now they
 seemed to me to be at the point where they were, in the point where they were, in the point where they were.
 people - apparently enough. They had their reasons.

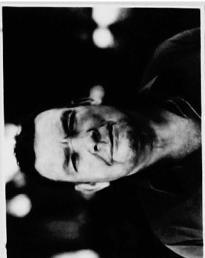


49) How does Japan achieve the 20% that it is able to have a success battle with Americans in the way they sell you more of the product than they're worth? They're people that are a real hard to be convinced and the people - and it's a great product in some part they realized you are the leader, selling more than anyone is willing.

[illegible]

1. *Phyllanthus*
 2. *Phyllanthus*
 3. *Phyllanthus*

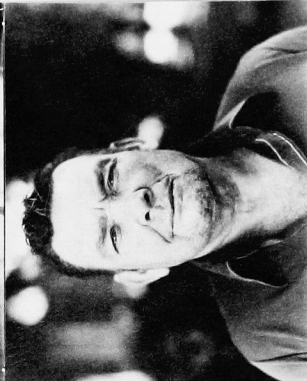
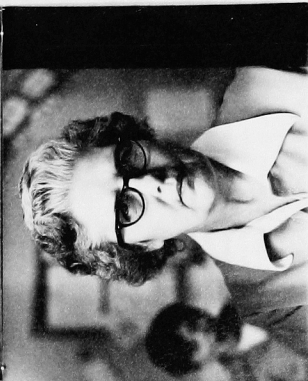
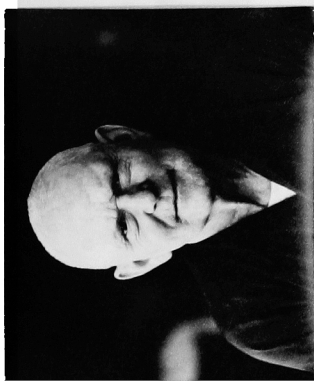
[illegible]



(5)

As I was photographing Jimmy
I realized I kept asking myself:
"who is the dominant character?"
Who I saw they? who was
aligning himself with whom?
who was the wisecracker? who
the peasant? the table turned
Several times, consistently in fact
the moment I would leave, the
next moment they.

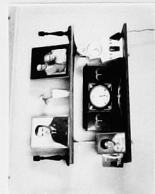




Through White
New York Garden 1.10
many to day very young children
at 12.00



⑥ Sydney Gibson, not red power pack of Southern grade school. He & my father both had that extreme Calvin, that I liked back then & that ultra conservative wardrobe that I once rejected w/ the Singh situation.



Carl & Edith Pearlman



Beulah Peterson, nee and presentress of the husband for a short and narrow

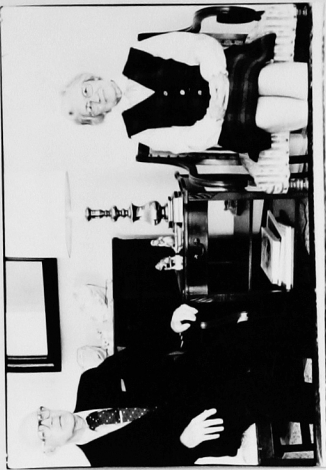


⑨ I was standing next to Mrs. Watson, close to the 11th & 12th streets. I saw the door & we were looking down. She asked me what church I attended on New York & I didn't answer. She slipped down "You're Protestant aren't you?" I mumbled a "No" & she said "Are you Catholic?" "Still no answer, you're Jewish!" I was silent.

Mel's house

I really like looking at me in the last month's photo. Very close. I shot across with a big face. She looked at me: she was shocked, as if she saw at once something & nothing. I was nothing.

⑩ I was standing near the P.O. building on the corner of North Main & Third. Maudie's office was across the street. I saw her car & I saw her. I was a 15 year young man. I was standing on the 11th & 12th streets. I was of an almost certain age. There was no one else, it was as if the machine was even. I happened to get out of the distance & standing, my car about one foot from a large flat with a rectangular balcony that was made of some thin transparent material at the corner. I was looking at that was I had in the cabinet of the other building. How I looked with that stuff in it. I was 11. The year 11. I was there. I was, large, large, large. I was almost full of stuff. I caught it by the string & I had it over the Maudie house. I sat down on the lawn, then opened the balcony & began to go through its contents. I don't remember what was inside, but I was all on the order of 11. I saw, a TV program guide from the local newspaper, a year old copy of TIME magazine, maybe a pamphlet. I saw some colored pencils with the insurance ads on them. I was interested in the stuff itself as well as the fact that it was in the hallway door North Third Street in a balcony.



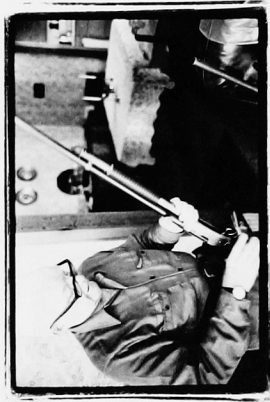
Dr. Bill Kennedy & Maudie's family

then I had this strange sensation that I had so many from before—that I shouldn't be where I was. I more around. I was in Maudie's yard. I was in her house then & I hadn't been invited. I was in a place that was accessible but forbidden. I was an intruder, inside a crowd of intimacy, privacy, defense, but I was so fully engaged, looking at the act itself & this seemed to be a good place to do it. So I didn't move. Also the balcony & its contents seemed to be related somehow to Maudie's house.

X
X
X

Finally Maudie opens the door a few yards away & begins to walk toward me. She is quiet & here, again, we are in the way that she would be if an & these people would be. I am sitting there on my back porch & I self-satisfied as if I had just eaten a good meal. I'm not hungry anymore because she has finally come out & shows that she knows in this & because I am excited about some things I want to show her. I get up. My neck feels open. I close it. I walk quickly & carefully over to her as she walks toward me. I say, "Look at this stuff. I found it down the street inside a balcony." She is quietly regarding me & what I have said. She doesn't say anything about the stuff, about the balcony or about the way I am dressed, but she doesn't want to argue with me.

The next thing I know I am across the street & Mrs. Watson is asking me about red gum.



Mrs. M. Friedman

youthful adventure & in so did in its summer contemporary call to keep my place now. Sh between the 'hat world & the side me now. There's a voice & on she is talk me & thinking the present.

X & ghost

public crowd, a Sunday it's softened by the / has the surface of the On the left, a very 'back by her. I ask the? World I have 906.2"

night today - square cloth on it another with me with the gap so slightly she seems attraction.

meant to be her just at received & brought here now this moment start the waist the breeze of that Mary is the same breeze & the L. the Komauwa it in all a moment.

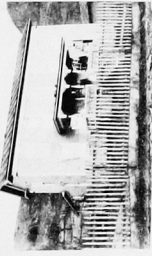


the exposure was a moment; the Sunday picnic, a moment; the life a moment; the transmission of data, a moment; the sensation I feel now is a moment. And next to me on the couch, wrapped in house dust & apron, this MOMENT with her strong hands, & her square back, her intelligent eyes looking right into mine, her soft, murmuring voice speaking to my mind quietly so as to lure, to entertain to fascinate, the young man who is there this moment.

Next to me there the shutter is closing, a moment within the moment that is a life.

I look again at the photograph. A tragedy had occurred a tragedy called history.

In speech has captured him via a great machine. Now to touch for all the days between.



Two shutters open & close in this room. I feel cheated by history, by time. Now here I felt this attraction, this longing to make a journey & have it be perfectly impossible. Perfect is the scene that perfect in. The great barrier stands, the quiet space / in between us. I take one last look at the image of my lot & re-enters it into its rightful place in the black album. I had been looking through a clean pane of glass at something real.

The old woman goes to the window. She calls me to the window & then out onto the broad porch. She points & talks of imaginary buildings, people, events. Slowly again the spell begins. The L. the Komauwa eddies in the near distance & then drops into the roughs. Time begins to flicker like the evening light upon the shoals. I let out the line & go adrift.

we move closer to the window together. I ask her to move closer to the window with me. Now very close to her I attack my life: the camera to a tripod & make a few exposures in the last moments of the day's light. I am not master of my work or of my thoughts. yet I receive gifts.

10 Uncle Kiddy

in the early 1930's, my aunt S's married a pharmacist, Albin Kiddy Walker, who was about 20 years in senior.

Uncle Kiddy, Snatch, was, wore bow ties, walked to work, rode in Cabs, drank real banana of course, was a self down traveler, an herb doctor who lived in the hills above Clay. Needles to say, I considered him my genius, mysterious & sophisticated. Oh, he also listened to music, had a copy of the Encyclopedia Britannica and mechanical pencils.

In 1912, when he was 16 years old, Uncle Kiddy started a photo album of snapshots he had taken & printed himself. It was a remarkable cataloging of life & incidents such things as program photos of his dear new home when construction and night of portraits of local personalities. One such portrait, mentioned in particular was of "Squirmy" Bill Carpenter, son of the first white man born in Frontier County. (He's said to have been born under a rock during an ice on road, that is, Squirmy Bill's dad, Solomon Carpenter.) In the picture, Squirmy is sitting in the end of a lawn boat. He had with him fishing pole, potting plan & bucket, bearded, with wild hair & looking somewhat ferocious, as some people do when are in such intimate contact with nature.

I loved Kiddy intensely because obviously he was sitting in the open end of the boat on that one day in the state of the man overhanging the water bank. I also loved Kiddy for the catalog he had so unconsciously made of local life - the inventory of personalities - and his ability to put me in touch with that first time that was my first boat that had come & gone before my time. That single picture of Squirmy Bill, among all the others, has stayed with me to this day (35 years?). And has been as much as anything the inspiration behind my passion for recovering the preservation that made up my world.

Kiddy walked & took Cabs for four reasons: ① he drank during the day, ② he didn't pay attention to what he was doing, perhaps instead his companion's conversation & the reason, ③ his room was so close to street. One of his father unit (P) that he had no place to park a car. He had worked second & if got so it was chosen to hire a cab for the 100-mile round trip to Charleston - then to drive me. He also worked some plan in France in 1918 & all this came was that Kiddy recorded in photographs the smiling young Kiddy standing beside the evidence of his driver, dead. He also made a snapshot of when Pauling walked through the streets of Paris, the whole concept of which I found enlightening.



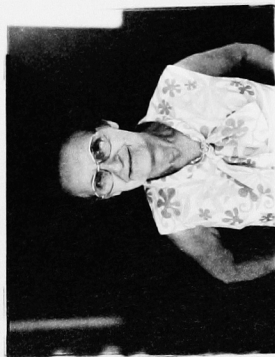
(I carefully mounted this others & his frequent on dark blue mount board thinking this was the last way to preserve them.)

On my 12th birthday, appropriation of all this older footage, Kiddy gave me a globe & my first camera. I bought a Brownie Bullseye camera 10th floor. I loved this, my first camera, because my parents used the European which was held at least land & somewhat in the window. When my camera was held there had the the sound cassette. Oliver Glemser lived on the TV Show "Man with a Camera".

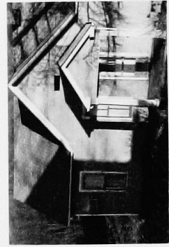
I was a real photographer now & set about to photograph the smooth grade Charleston to western / iron down. Also, another pattern had been set.

Kiddy also astonished me by the way he really offhand pictures of people with his 35 (the first 35 / had seen), jumping around first one corner, then the next, "waiting" for an if he had never heard my mother's lecture about how much the stuff cost. He had the slightly yellowed pictures & views of Elk River, hanging over some his father, and they were, my God, eight by ten inches in size.

After Kiddy drank himself to death in 1960, S's let me up into the attic to look through his photo stuff. In that fourth floor hallway I found boxes uncountable. I found his diaries, Western landscape from a wire lamp near the front window. I found the negatives, some porcelain stamps & an EX10 contact frame. The equipment became the nucleus of my first darkroom. I also discovered that since the introduction of Kodachrome, Kiddy had taken only color slides, and it was a long time before I could convince him for that or for Kodak for having printed the stuff.



Mr. & Mrs. Claver & Broady



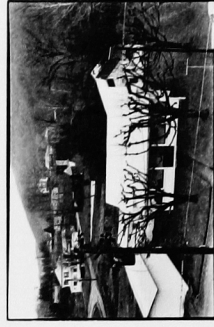
More Sheds



Ray & Dean Lane

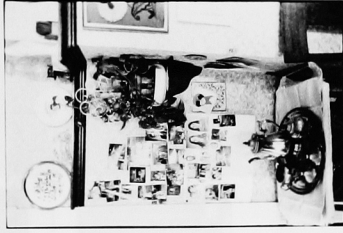


Mrs. Kelsey

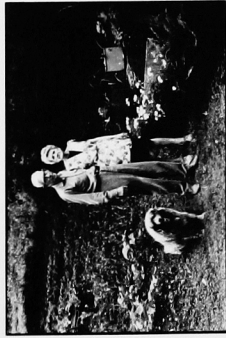


Olle Hammack

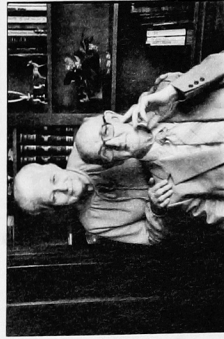
The migration is low, dormant & unexceptional. Celas are subtle in quiet, gray light. It is difficult to identify by the...



Florida House : House is made of all photographs of a series of the Bureau of the... John House, how you make a million dollars... Selling & replacing person & return to Florida.



Ed More, back to back, 1910 and 1911, the 1910 and 1911... had a person in a 1910 and 1911, after the 1910 and 1911.



Carlton & Enne House : Enne is related as principal of Sullivan grade school. He took his machine at Columbia in the 1920s. He had to take the machine kids to the woods to look at... and then, leave & 1920s.

[illegible]

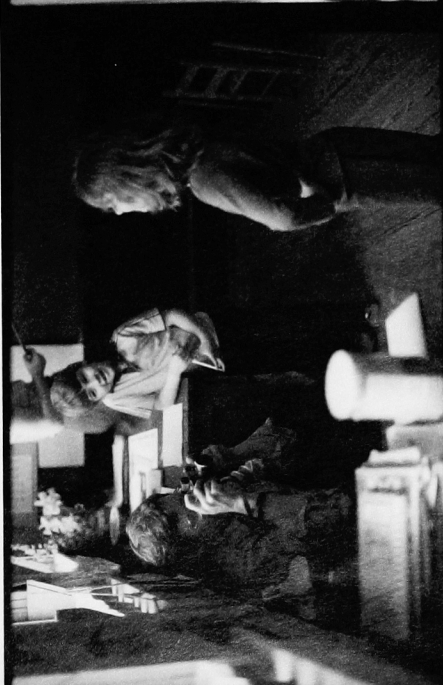
Now, when it comes time to cut down the b.g. trees in the second yard, I think the study.



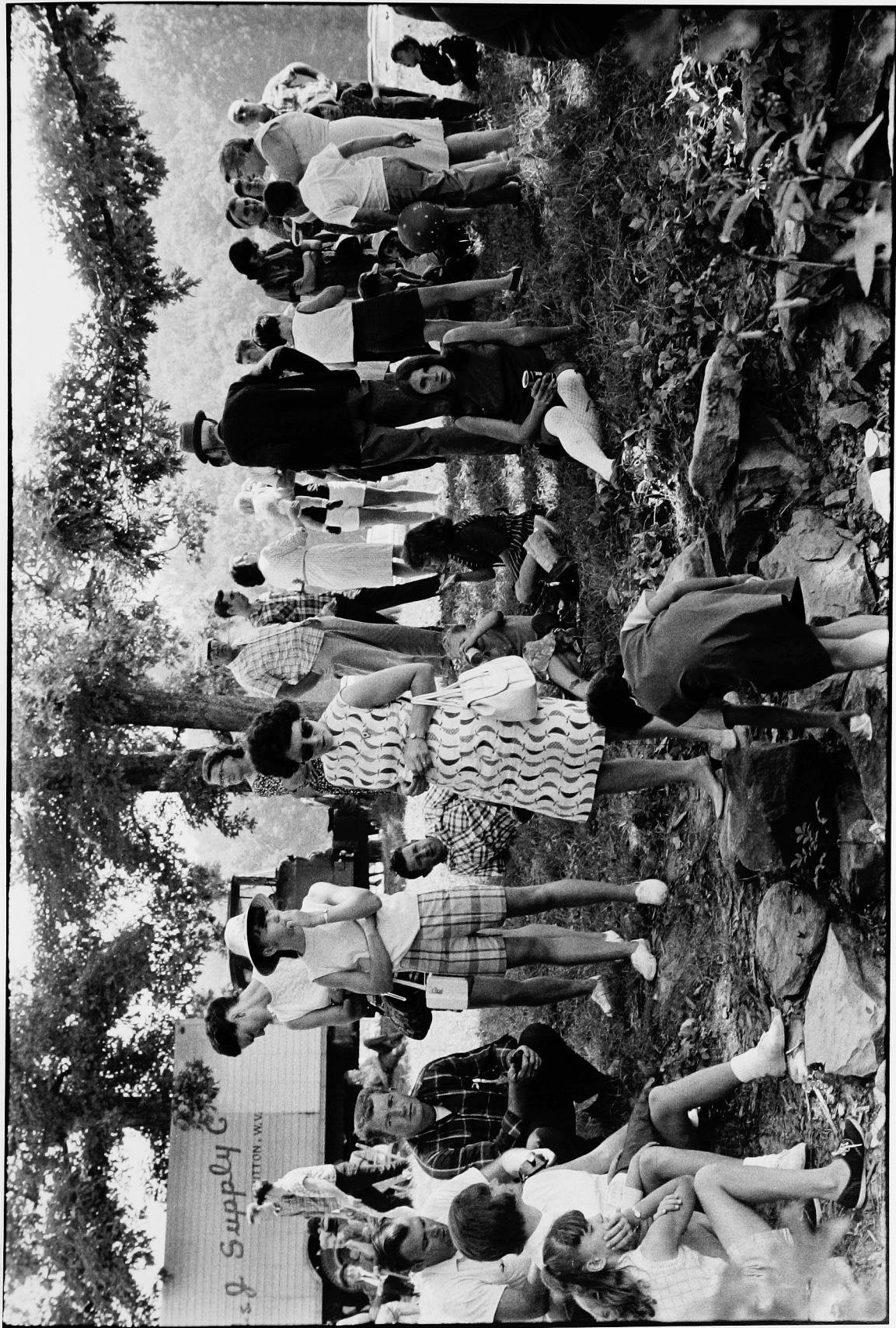
① If a free in your heart you would give of service, and if you have not to call it done, you will continue to be rewarded. But if you do call it done, you will have to be rewarded. No matter what you do, you will be rewarded to remember.

The number is too distant, unapproachable. Colors are subdued in quiet, gray light. It is difficult to identify the locale, the season, the time of day, the dimension or distance from which I see a flower, a bird, one calling softly like a presence.

The post is a wall against the present. It is huge & powerful. Too large to get ourselves around, a bit dark, a regret, finished, never finished.









Where Salt Lick Meets the Little Kanawha: A very Young Woman

(One summer I traveled from farm to farm in a pickup I borrowed from Rodney, talking to people and looking for old pictures. Most of the people I met were the old residents and I learned a lot from listening to them. I learned that the fundamentals of human nature--fear, courage, and so on--do not change much or had not within recent memory. I learned that people in any time see that time as the time, the culmination and terminus of history, that we are here only for a brief moment, and that with the help of photographs--images, like data chips, sent down from almost another century--those moments become even briefer and time becomes compressed.)

An old woman and I are in the front room sitting on a scratchy, maroon sofa. The river is below; a couple of stories above, an enormous tree. She is talking, and as she talks I begin to drift. With her quiet voice and her careful movement she begins to mesmerize me much as I am mesmerized while watching a child at play when that child is wholly absorbed in what she is doing.

She is telling me about her photographs. They show the house when it was built in 1890; her father, the founder and sole proprietor of the Western Central Telephone Company; her brother playing in a brass band under the tree. Her life seems so momentary and even less than momentary is the life of one who appears now only in photographs--her mother: 1868-1935.

Now I hear her telling of her youthful adventures and creating a world around us so vivid in its textural details that it assumes contemporary fidelity. I find it difficult to keep my place in time, difficult to distinguish between the woman who inhabited that world and the woman who is sitting beside me now. There is a hint of freshness in her hushed voice, and as she talks it is as though we were talking not about the past but the present.

Time begins to flicker. I relax and go adrift.

I see a group photograph of a picnic crowd, a Sunday School class in 1906. The effect is softened by the work of years as it times and silvers the surface of the clear, airless artifact. On the left, a very young woman. I am struck by her. I ask myself, "Could it be possible? Would I have loved her, wanted her in 1906?"

I see the photograph again. I see an upright body--square shoulders and a firm figure shrouded in white cloth as it arches gently to the deep grass. Her eyes connect with mine with surprising directness across the barrier. Ever so slightly she seems to round and move. I feel a moment of attraction.

A breeze flicks the hem of her skirt and causes it to blur--just a bit--as it contacts the glass plate that recieved and brought this woman on the long journey to me here now this moment and that moment becomes blurred the flicked skirt the waist the eyes seem to be calling to me personally breeze of that May morning coming through the screen door is the same breeze that caressed her skirt Salt Lick and the Little Kanawha same smells same tree frog sounds it is all a moment.

The exposure was a moment; the Sunday picnic, a moment; the life a moment; the transmission of data, a moment; the sensation I feel now

is a moment. And next to me on the couch, wrapped in house dress and apron, this MOMENT, with her strong hands and her square back and her intelligent eyes looking right into mine, her soft, mesmerizing voice speaking to my mind quietly so as to lure, to entertain, to fascinate the young man who is there this moment.

Next to me there the shutter is closing, a moment within the moment that is a life. I look again at the photograph. A tragedy had occurred, a tragedy called history.

In synch two cogs turn in a great machine
Never to touch for all the cogs between.

Two shutters open and close in this room. I feel cheated by history, by time. Never have I felt this attraction, this longing to make a journey and have it be perfectly impossible. Perfect is the scene that protects us. The great barrier stands, the quiet space lies between us. I take one last look at the image of my love and reinsert it into its rightful place in the black album. I had been looking through a clean pane of glass at something real.

The old woman goes to the window. She calls me to the window and then out onto the broad porch. She points and talks of imaginary buildings, people, events. Slowly again the spell begins. The Little Kanawha eddys in the near distance and then drops into the roughs. Time begins to flicker like the evening light upon the shoals. I let out the line and go adrift.

We move closer to the window together. I ask her to move closer to the window with me. Now very close to her I attach my little camera to a tripod and make a few exposures in the last moments of the day's

light. I am not master of my work nor of my thoughts, yet I receive gifts.

March 11, 1982

Dear Bob & Mary Dan,

I have really been bad when it comes to answering letters, and for this I am sorry. Bob we have set up a Life Estate on my share of the property and it has been recorded in Upshur County. We did quite a little bit of research and it is safe and a real problem for the Coal Company if they try to sell the property on the Court House Steps. Jim Douglas says you should not put a life estate in Ezra's name, but I must admit that it has been so long since I talked to him about it that I forget some of the reasons. One of them was that since Ezra is so young there were some complications which would cause us not to be able to mine the land or do anything else until he reaches 18. So naturally that would not be good. I'll ask Rodney what the other reasons were as sometimes I am not too good at this second hand information.

We have really been busy recently since the State of West Virginia passed the law that each business, younger than 5 years, must place a deposit on account with the Department of Labor for 1 months labor plus 15% for a months wages at full capacity. In other words, get someone to put up bond for us or else go our own bond by sending them the cash. Anyway ours, at full capacity is \$6,300.00 and that was quite a chunk to tie up all at once when we needed it for working capital. Anyway, I did quite a lot of research and found out that we could get a Certificate of Deposit for that amount in Dept. of Labors name and also in Hickman Electric Corp. name, which is what we did. At on 2½ yrs. at 14.05 % we will come out ahead, but the next two and ½ yrs will really be hard because all our working capital is tied up. If they don't get you one way they get you another, I guess.

Did Ezra get the book we sent for his birthday? We thought of him quite a bit at his birthday and wished you were still living in Sutton so we could be a part of everything.

Mary Dan, I was glad to here about Eva's good news. I hope everything works out the way she wants. The trip sounds great too.

I have been really busy the last month writing letters and recruiting members for the West Virginians for Life Organization. I am also a member of the National Right of Life and have found both organizations quite rewording. Yesterday was a real break through for us as the Hatch/Ashbrook Amendment to the Constitution went through the Judiciary Committee and will now be on the Senate floor for all the Senators to vote. This is the first step in stopping abortion on demand.

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I had been putting off writing because I had so much to write, but I have found out that typing is so much quicker and easier, perhaps if you don't mind, I will write more often this way.

I have agreed to Direct Vacation Bible School again this year and I am getting excited about it even though it isn't until June. Also I am taking an exercise class on Tuesdays and we exercise for 35-40 minutes then run $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and then play about 5-4 volleyball games. The class is all girls so I am getting pretty good at volleyball. Of course our church group still plays on Friday evenings, but now I can compete with the guys better. I haven't lost any weight but I am firming up some.

Now, news about Rodney. He has finished $4\frac{1}{2}$ months work in Bayard and is home now for three months working on a job at Jacksons Mill. It has proved to be an adjustment after the girls and I being used to him only here on the weekends. As far as what I am getting ready to tell you, it is top secret so don't breathe a word. Rodney has even sworn me to secrecy but if I can't tell my brother, then who can I tell. It looks like there will be a washing plant going in at Bayard for Buffalo Coal and they may get Rodney to do the wiring. If this is true and if everything works out he will have work there for 2 years. He will only except the job if the girls and I will go with him, because it is so hard on him to be away from us as he has been most of the winter. I have agreed, but we haven't even mentioned it to the girls because it may not happen. If it does, I have made him promise me that we won't rent the house here because I just couldn't bear it. When we wanted to come home on weekends we wouldn't have any place to go. It will be like living a double life, two houses, two churches, etc. Anyway if we can find a house reasonable and out in the country we will buy it and ruff it for 2 years, leaving half the furniture here and half with us. Crazy, I know but it will be different and the change is kind of exciting, especially since I know it is only temporary.

Other news about Rodney, Wednesday night Rodney was voted unanimously in the church as a deacon. He had been in training for it for a year and now he will have his Ordination Service the middle of April. We have really come a long way haven't we. I am really proud of him, and I know this is right for him and for the church.

Catherine and Amy have been exceptionally well this winter but Kimberly has been exceptionally sick. She has had bronchitis 7 times, and now it is in chronic stages. She has been doing better the last two weeks. I hope Ezra has been well; we think of him every day. We think of all of you every day.

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We cut a door between Catherines room and the gun room and now we have another bed room in there. Rodney didn't seem to mind giving up his room and it has been great for Amy to have her own room. I painted the woodwork and wall-papered it for her and it is really cute. She says it is still like a dream come true and she thinks she will wake up and it won't have happened.

We have a Pizze Hut now between Sutton and Gassaway so it has been quite a treat. Now Rodney and I don't have to go to Clarksburg for a night out we just get a sitter and go there. The atmosphere is pretty nice.

Is the coupon war still going on there? I signed a petition the other day to Kroger and Foodland to start having double day coupon days. I don't know if it will do any good or not. Sometimes I can save around 11.00 on 100.00 of groceries but the double day would really help. I would be glad to send coupons to you if I knew what you save and what you buy but perhaps it would be a waste of time since we don't live close enough to correspond regularly.

My typing is quite terrible since I have been hurrying and I know my spelling is as bad, but that comes natural for me. Hope you can make heads or tails out of all this. Please don't mention the job and moving thing or I will get shot. Especially to Rodney, when you may call or write, or anyone.

Love you all three,

